Gutter Magic
Issue #4 of 4
22-Page Comic Script
By Rich Douek

PAGE ONE

PANEL 1
A pair of cavemen dance in front of a roaring fire.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): Since the beginning, mankind has always sought a connection with the higher world.

PANEL 2
An African shaman stares intensely at a steaming cup of dark liquid he is bringing to his lips.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): Our ancestors used drugs, poisons, potions...

PANEL 3
A hooded figure holds a jeweled dagger above a terrified sacrifice victim.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): ...blood sacrifices, and rites even more barbarous.

PANEL 4
A silhouetted man holds his hands to the sky as energy and runes crackle around them.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): And sure enough, some of them got lucky.

PANEL 5
Oppenheimer cups his hands to his face, lighting a cigarette - the light from below makes him look a little sinister.

OPPENHEIMER: But luck wasn't going to get us through the war.

PAGE TWO

PANEL 1
Flashback to WWII - a Nazi dragon strafes a battlefield with fire. Ruined tanks and dead bodies all around.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): They were winning, you see.

PANEL 2
A group of Nazi wizards are performing a ritual together - the air crackles with energy.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): We were vastly outnumbered. Hopelessly outgunned.

PANEL 3
A younger Oppenheimer stands arguing with a pair of wizards. They're not tearing into each other, just having a heated discussion.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): The war didn't need another shaman, blindly grasping at shadows.

PANEL 4
Old Oppenheimer flashes Cinder a wide grin.

OPPENHEIMER: It needed a scientist.

PANEL 5
In an laboratory room, a man is strapped to an upright circular platform, arms and legs splayed out like Da Vinci's vitruvian man. The platform is part of a larger machine, with cables and tubes snaking around it. Magical energy courses through his body, but its not going well - he's getting fried. Shadowed, in the foreground Oppenheimer and other scientists take notes.

OPPENHEIMER: We began experimenting.

OPPENHEIMER: There were... many failures.

PAGE THREE

PANEL 1
A man stands silhouetted in the shadows. In one hand, we can see he's holding a gun. Magical runes crackle around the other, illuminating part of his military uniform - but we can't seee his face.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): But at last, we had our first new magus.

PANEL 2
The figure steps out of the shadows, gun raised. We can see now that it's Cyrus, in his prime as a young, newly made wizard.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): We had Cyrus.

PANEL 3
Cinder looks utterly shocked.

CINDER: You're... you're saying...

PANEL 4
Oppenheimer stubs out his cigarette. We can see now that Cinder, Blacktooth and Oppenheimer are in a different part of the laboratory from last issue. They are surrounded by strange consoles and machines - Oppenheimer is still attached to his chair.

OPPENHEIMER: That yes, Cinder. In many cases, magic is in the blood.

OPPENHEIMER: But it was never in yours.

PANEL 5
Cinder looks deflated, confused.

CINDER: What about my father, Oppenheimer?

OPPENHEIMER: Cyrus had me put his children through the process. But your father refused to do the same to you.

PANEL 5
Oppenheimer has turned his eyes away from Cinder.

OPPENHEIMER: Besides, I had to stop. It was too much.

OPPENHEIMER: There was... an incident. A girl…

OPPENHEIMER: You should be grateful.

PANEL 6
Cinder looks up, through narrowed eyes.

NO COPY

PAGE FOUR

PANEL 1
Cinder shouts at Oppenheimer, in a rage. His hand is close to his holster.

CINDER: Grateful for what?

CINDER: Leaving me crippled, when I could have been running – hell – flying this whole time?

OPPENHEIMER: They were concerned about your safety. And rightly so.

PANEL 2
Close on Cinder, enraged.

CINDER: Safety. Leaving me defenseless in a society where people can call lightning out of thin air is safety? Bullshit.

CINDER: They were too scared to do what they had to.

PANEL 3
Cinder has his gun pressed up against Oppenheimer's chest.

CINDER: Well I'm not. You're going to do it. Now.

PANEL 4
Blacktooth grabs Cinder's free arm.

BLACKTOOTH: Hey, wait a minute… that whole business with shoving a gun in his face - that was just --

PANEL 5
Cinder cocks the barrel.

CINDER: That was always the plan, Blacktooth. If he's not going to --

PANEL 6
Oppenheimer smiles at Cinder

OPPENHEIMER: Come, come. There's no need for all this. I will perform the ritual.

OPPENHEIMER: And then you can truly see if it was worth all the fuss.

PAGE FIVE

PANEL 1
Cinder is strapped to a large, circular upright table, splayed out like the test subject on page two. There are various tubes and wires running off of him. Blacktooth looks on from the side as Oppenheimer adjusts some dials.Oppenheimer has donned a set of goggles.

OPPENHEIMER: So, you found the first piece in Cyrus's library…

PANEL 2
Cinder looks over at Oppenheimer. He's trying to look calm.

CINDER: Yes. He'd sold or traded all the rest by then. Didn't know what he had.

CINDER: He kept good records, though. His ledger had every--

PANEL 3
Oppenheimer raises a hand for Cinder to be quiet as he adjusts a valve.

OPPENHEIMER: Almost ready.

PANEL 4
Blacktooth runs his fingers over a piece of machinery, looking up at Oppenheimer.

BLACKTOOTH: This doesn't look safe.

PANEL 5
Oppenheimer throws a large switch - electricity crackles through the machine.

OPPENHEIMER: It's not.

PAGE SIX

PANEL 1
Cinder's head is thrown back, eyes are open wide as energy crackles around him.

CINDER: Gnh!

PANEL 2
Cinder's screaming, disembodied spirit is splayed across the tree of life, outstretched arms and legs, again like the Vitruvian man. The top circle should be just above his head, like a crown.

CINDER: Aaagh!

PANEL 3
Close in on Cinder's screaming mouth, as though we're about to fly inside of it.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): Concentrate. Try to focus on my voice.

PANEL 4
Black panel.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): This is the beginning.

PANEL 5
A tiny speck of light glows in the blackness. Cinder's face looks down at it - it could fit on the tip of his nose.

CINDER: …of what?

PANEL 6
There is a huge, cosmic, Kirby-esque explosion of energy, a multitude of colors and shapes.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): Everything.

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL 1
Largest panel - Cinder's spirit floats in space, with the majestic universe spinning all around - galaxies, planets, vortices... again, think of how Jack Kirby drew space - unbelievably vast, but alive with energy. One key aspect is everything should visually flow out of one central point - the source of the explosion (the big bang).

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): The entire universe...

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): ...everything that ever was, or will be...

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): ...from one speck of dust.

PANEL 2
A gigantic, ethereal Cinder reaches out and grasps a star.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): Your body, and the stars themselves, are made of the same elements.

PANEL 3
Cinder has pulled the star close to him, we can see a human figure inside.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): There is a piece of everything in you.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): And conversely...

PANEL 4
The figure inside is another image of Cinder. Giant Cinder and tiny Cinder regard each other.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): … a piece of you in everything.

PANEL 5
Giant Cinder extends a finger toward the star, as if to poke it. Tiny Cinder mimics this motion.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): That is magic Cinder.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): Knowing, with the very fiber of your being, that you are connected to everything.

PANEL 6

The 2 fingers meet, reminiscent of Michaelangelo's "God giving life to Adam" scene on the sistine chapel (http://my-bellavita.com/wp-content/uploads/Italy-Experience-Sistine-Chapel.png) A bright, intense light emanates from the point of contact.

OPPENHEIMER (CAP): That you can move the universe as surely as you can move your finger.

PAGE EIGHT

PANEL 1
Back in the laboratory, Cinder's face is exultant, full of joy. Energy courses through him.

CINDER: I... I can feel it!

CINDER: I…

PANEL 2
Cinder's expression has changed to one of shock and concern.

CINDER: ...something's wrong.

OPPENHEIMER (OP): I know.

PANEL 3
The Morgue stands, smiling, above Oppenheimer, who is sprawled on the floor, his cables and tubes ripped out, being held down by magical energy coming from her hand. If you can fit them in, a pair of Ghost Knives are holding Blacktooth hostage behind her..

MORGUE: There was an agreement, Oppenheimer.

PANEL 4
The Morgue walks casually across the room, trailing energy from her fingertips.

MORGUE: You kept your life. Your research. Your tower.
All on one condition.

PANEL 5
The Morgue hits Oppenheimer with a blast of energy, her lips bent back in a cruel grimace.

MORGUE: < excrutiating torment! >

MORGUE: No. New. Wizards.

PAGE NINE

PANEL 1
Cinder shouts at the Morgue, still bound to the machine.

CINDER: Enough, Morgue. You’ve got me.

PANEL 2
Oppenheimer grimaces through the pain.

OPPENHEIMER: It's not you she wants, Cinder.

PANEL 3
The Morgue looks sideways at Cinder, her mouth twitches with the slightest smile.

MORGUE: It's true, I don't want you.

MORGUE: Not yet.

PANEL 4
Cinder strains in his bonds.

CINDER: You’ve been trying to kill me ever since -

PANEL 5
The Morgue smirks.

MORGUE: Ha. There’s that classic Byrnes arrogance.

MORGUE: You think it’s all about you.

PANEL 6
The Morgue’s expression changes - her eyes go white with power, her smirk is replaced with a vicious scowl.

MORGUE: If I wanted you dead, you think I’d need to try?

MORGUE: < lightning wrack! >

PAGE TEN

PANEL 1
Cinder convulses with pain as the Morgue blasts him.

MORGUE (CAPTION): "I kill who I please. But our friend Oppenheimer here was clever."

PANEL 2
Smoke rises from the Morgue's fingertips as Cinder slumps in his chains.

MORGUE: He cut a deal with the Conclave. Kept himself safe from my wrath..

PANEL 3
The Morgue leans close into Cinder's face.

MORGUE: Not until you came along, anyway.

CINDER: Sh- Shiver...

PANEL 4
The Morgue walks towards Oppenheimer, who is being brought to his feet by some Ghost Knives.

MORGUE: …tried to stop you? Or is it because of her that you're here at all?

MORGUE: As though <u>you</u> could take on a dragon.

PANEL 5
The Morgue looks back at Cinder, smirking.

MORGUE: What were you planning to do? Shoot at it?

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL 1
The Morgue holds her hands horizontally in front of her chest, and a ball of energy begins to form. (this is the basic position I want, just in front as opposed to the side http://bit.ly/pyXkKI)

MORGUE: That's always your plan, though, isn't it?

MORGUE: So little imagination.

MORGUE: < dance on a string >

PANEL 2
Cinder's bonds click open.

SFX: CLICK

MORGUE (CAPTION): "That's why, while you want real power..."

PANEL 3
In between the Morgue's hands, we see a marionette of Cinder, complete with strings of energy leading up to the Morgue's fingers.

MORGUE: … you'll always be a puppet of those who truly wield it.

PANEL 4
Cinder lurches forward, out of the machine.

CINDER: What's this? Don't have the guts to do it yourself?

PANEL 5
Two Ghost Knives hold Oppenheimer up, straightening him by grabbing his head and bending it back.

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL 1
Cinder raises his gun struggling against the Morgue's control. The Morgue gives a haughty, bittersweet grin.

MORGUE: What did he tell you?

PANEL 2
Flashback - Shiver is strapped into Oppenheimer's machine. She looks to be her current age, but not nearly as pale as she is now.

MORGUE: That your parents didn't want to risk his little procedure on you?

PANEL 3
Flashback - Shiver's head is thrown back, as energy surges through her body.

MORGUE (CAP): Did he tell you why?

PANEL 4
The Morgue holds Shiver's corpse close to her, as a younger Oppenheimer stands behind them both, reaching forward in worry and concern, as though he's going to grasp the Morgue's shoulder. This is a human moment for her – no façade, she's crying, feeling true grief.

MORGUE (CAP): Did he tell you what he did to my daughter?

PANEL 5
Flashback - Shiver is laid out on a stone slab. the Morgue stands above her, working powerful magic - she's under a lot of strain, maybe even bleeding from her eyes or nose - ghostly spirits surround them, the air is charged with energy.

MORGUE (CAP): Or what I had to do to bring her back?

PAGE THIRTEEN

PANEL 1
Oppenheimer looks up. He's exhausted, beaten, resigned to his fate.

OPPENHEIMER: I told you there would be risks.

PANEL 2
The Morgue looks down her nose, gloating.

MORGUE: And I told you there would be consequences.

PANEL 3
Cinder is sweating, trying as hard as he can to break free.

CINDER: No!

PANEL 4
Really close on the Morgue's face. You'd expect her to be smiling, but she's not. This is the fulfillment of a decades-old vendetta, and she's making this final decision in total clarity, free of emotion.

MORGUE: Yes.

PANEL 5
Big muzzle flare as the gun fires.

SFX: BLAM

PAGE FOURTEEN

PANEL 1
Cinder stares down the smoking barrel of his gun, in shock.

MORGUE (OP): Well...

PANEL 2
The Morgue lets the magic marrionette of Cinder dissipate.

MORGUE: … that's that.

PANEL 3
Cinder's eyes flash to the side - he realizes he's free.

PANEL 4
Cinder swings the gun around, training it on the Morgue.

CINDER: I'm going to --

PANEL 5
The Morgue extends a hand, and a bolt of energy arcs across the room to surround Cinder's gun.

MORGUE: Please.

MORGUE: < freeze in place >

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL 1
The Morgue walks toward Cinder, still holding her hand up to sustain the magic.

MORGUE: I have a much more intriguing idea.

MORGUE: Shiver has her uses. But I could use you, Cinder.

PANEL 2
Cinder looks at the Morgue with narrowed, suspicious eyes.

CINDER: What are you talking about?

PANEL 3
The Morgue leans in towards Cinder.

MORGUE: It's simple. I need a living apprentice.

PANEL 4
We see Blacktooth being held by a pair of Ghost Knives.

MORGUE(OP): But you must cut all your ties.

MORGUE(OP): I can't have divided loyalties.

PAGE SIXTEEN

PANEL 1
Cinder looks at the Morgue like she's crazy.

CINDER: You're mad.

PANEL 2
The Morgue is behind Cinder, practically whispering in his ear.

MORGUE: Am I?

PANEL 3
We see the smoldering wreck of the airship wedged against the spire.

MORGUE: You've chased this power your entire life. Left a trail of mayhem, destruction, and death in your wake.

PANEL 4
We see Victor at his desk, looking contemplative, with his hand on a glass of whiskey, and a half-empty bottle in front of him.

MORGUE: You've plundered libraries, ruined friendships, practically destroyed your family's good name in pursuit of this.

PANEL 5
Blacktooth looks up at Cinder, scared he might actually do it.

MORGUE (OP): And you're going to let one little goblin stand in the way of it now?

PAGE SEVENTEEN

PANEL 1
The Morgue is right next to him, smiling.

MORGUE: You're the one who sounds mad to me.

PANEL 2
Cinder raises his gun. There's no more magic holding it. He also looks scared that he might actually do it.

CINDER: I...

PANEL 3
Blacktooth's eyes widen - he's silently begging Cinder not to shoot.

PANEL 4
The Morgue looks triumphant, gloating.

MORGUE: Yessss…

PANEL 5
Cinder's eyes are wide, beads of sweat trickle down his face.

PANEL 6
The Morgue takes a step forward, Cinder follows her with his eyes

MORGUE: I'll even show you how to bring him back.

MORGUE: Just like Shiver.

PANEL 7
Cinder's thumb pulls the hammer back.

PAGE EIGHTEEN

PANEL 1
Cinder whirls and slams the gun across the Morgue's jaw, pistol whipping her.

SFX: CRACK!

PANEL 2
Cinder looks down towards his feet. Blood drips from the barrel of his gun.

CINDER: I bet you're warded against any spell a mage could think to throw at you.

CINDER: No need to protect yourself against a simple punch, though... who would dare?

PANEL 3
The Morgue is on her knees, dazed and cradling her jaw.

CINDER: That's right. The puppet. The pawn.

CINDER: Well, maybe you're right.

CINDER: Maybe I won't ever be the one pulling the strings...

PANEL 4
Cinder puts the gun to Morgue's head.

CINDER: … but neither will you.

PANEL 4
Cinder is distracted as he's about to pull the trigger.

CINDER: What the--

PANEL 5
A point of light shimmers in midair, like a star.

PANEL 6

The Morgue is smiling, with blood dripping from her mouth. She's very smug here, highlighting the irony of her statement. Over her shoulder, we see the point of light has grown into a small vortex of energy.

MORGUE (SMALL TYPE): Hah. Too late, Cinder.

MORGUE (SMALL TYPE): That… that'll teach you to gloat.

PAGE NINETEEN

PANEL 1
The vortex has grown into swirling portal, and several GYRESMEN step out. They are the mages' police force - grim faced, wearing dark uniforms. Each holds a special weapon called a nullifier rod.

GYRESMAN: In the name of the Conclave, you will stand down, Cinder Byrnes, and come with us.

PANEL 2
Cinder and the Gyresman stare each other down, with their weapons aimed at each other.

CINDER: Oh, will I now?

PANEL 3
The Gyresman looks down his nose at Cinder, impassionate and haughty..

GYRESMAN: If you wish to live.

PANEL 4
Extreme closeup of Cinder's face. His eyes are narrowed. His expression says he's had just about enough of everyone's crap.

PANEL 5
Closeup of Cinder's thumb on the pistol's hammer. We're unsure if he's cocking it, or uncocking it.

PAGE TWENTY

PANEL 1
Blacktooth stands in the dark hallway of a cell block, next to a barred door.

BLACKTOOTH: They just asked me some questions, is all. They didn't want me..

PANEL 2
Cinder sits inside his cell, not even looking at Blacktooth. Daylight streams in from a small barred window.

CINDER: No, I guess I'm all they need.

PANEL 3
Blacktooth looks over his shoulder, down the hallway.

BLACKTOOTH: Listen. My uncle Rotwind told me they used goblin work crews to build this place.

PANEL 4
Blacktooth leans in towards the bars, wearing his most conspiratorial grin.

BLACKTOOTH: Now for prisons, we always build our own tunnels… just in case.

BLACKTOOTH: I know a guy...

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

PANEL 1
Cinder gives Blacktooth a sober look.

CINDER: Save it, Blacktooth. They're going to let me go, just as soon as they're convinced that the ritual failed.

CINDER: That at best, I'm done with it all. And at worst, I keep going.

PANEL 2
Cinder looks down at his hand, like he's looking at dirt under his fingernails.

CINDER: Hustling, scraping by… back to just being a pest.

PANEL 3
Blacktooth looks bemused – a little shocked, but with a bit of wry amusement.

BLACKTOOTH: Come on, now… you? Cinder Byrnes? Giving up?

PANEL 4
Cinder looks at Blacktooth out of the corner of his eyes. He's going to reveal something.

CINDER: I was close, Blacktooth…

PANEL 5
Close on Cinder's face, as he looks up at Blacktooth and continues his revelation.

CINDER: I saw something.

PAGES TWENTY TWO-TWENTY THREE

This should be seperate panels, but laid across both pages, like a spread. What we'll be doing here is showing the various characters in the aftermath of what just went down, just going from character to character, seeing where they've ended up.

PANEL 1
The Morgue gazes out of one of the triangular windows of the Chrysler building, touching the glass with her fingertips. She looks grim.

CINDER (CAP): "Something that none of them that were born with it have ever bothered to look at."

PANEL 2
Pull back further to show that she's looking out the window of Oppenheimer's former quarters. She's taken his place now.

NO COPY

PANEL 3
A Gyresman places the Morgue's bird skull totem into Victor's hand.

CINDER (CAP): "With all their books, and their bloodlines. "

PANEL 4
We pull back to see Victor is standing among a conclave of wizards, including a scarred Durand from issue 1. The wizards smile on as Victor crushes the skull in his fist.

CINDER (CAP): "Everything that says 'I can do this, but you can't.'"

PANEL 5
Whispers perches over the arm of a corpse with a needle and thread, sewing a wound together.

CINDER (CAP): "That says what they do is the real magic…"

PANEL 6
Shiver sits up in Whisper's work room, running her hand over her newly stitched arm. Her whole body looks like patchwork, sewn back together. Whispers looks on quietly.

CINDER (CAP): "…and that all the little tricks…"

PANEL 7
A Ghost Knife flees down an alleyway, looking behind himself in fear – he's clutching an amulet in his fist, like he's just robbed someone.

CINDER (CAP): "…the charms…"

PANEL 8
The Ghost Knife has turned a corner and run into a small group of ritualistically scarred men, cradling clubs and looking like they're going to beat the crap out of him. Nic the Imp perches on the lead scarred man's shoulder.

CINDER (CAP): "…the potions, the powders…"

PANEL 9
The Ratcatcher is sitting at the bar in Smiling Mary's, laughing and raising a drink with some of the other patrons - a nice stack of coin is on the bar in front of him. To the rear of the bar, a shadowed figure sips quietly from a mug.

CINDER (CAP): "…all those things that people like us live by…"

PANEL 10
We see now the shadowed figure is Blacktooth, silently sipping his drink, with murder in his eyes.

CINDER (CAP): "…and die for…"

PANEL 11
It's evening. There's a squat prison building off the island of Manhattan - it's dark and imposing, like Arkham Asylum - bars on the windows, gargoyles (maybe even living ones), etc.

NO COPY

PANEL 12
Move in on one of the barred windows. We can't see inside yet.

CINDER (CAP): "…well, that was just gutter magic."

PAGE TWENTY-FOUR

PANEL 1
A guard passes Cinder's darkened cell - Cinder has his back to the bars, and is looking over his shoulder as the guard goes by. It's noticeably later from when Blacktooth was here – deep into the night.

CINDER (CAP): "Like they drew a line in the sand…"

PANEL 2
Cinder sticks out his head as far as he can between the bars, and watches the guard's back receding down the hallway.

CINDER (CAP): "…and we all agreed it was real."

PANEL 3
Cinder cups his hands in front of his face. His face has a slight grin.

CINDER (CAP): "But what if, in the end, despite all we've been told…"

CINDER: [whispers a few magical syllables tentatively]

PANEL 4
Pull back through the barred window, we can still see Cinder inside, focusing on his hands. His grin has spread into a full, knowing smile.

CINDER (CAP): "… what if it's <u>all</u> just gutter magic?"

CINDER: [more magic syllables, really small]

PANEL 5
Pull back even farther so we can see a row of dark, barred windows around Cinder's cell. From his window, and his alone, we see light streaming out.

CAPTION: THE END